

**The Relation of the School
to the Indian Health Question.**

GIVEN BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES INDIAN EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION,

St. Paul, Minn., July, 1896,

BY
Dr. MARTHA M. WALDRON,
RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
OF
Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute,
Hampton, Virginia.

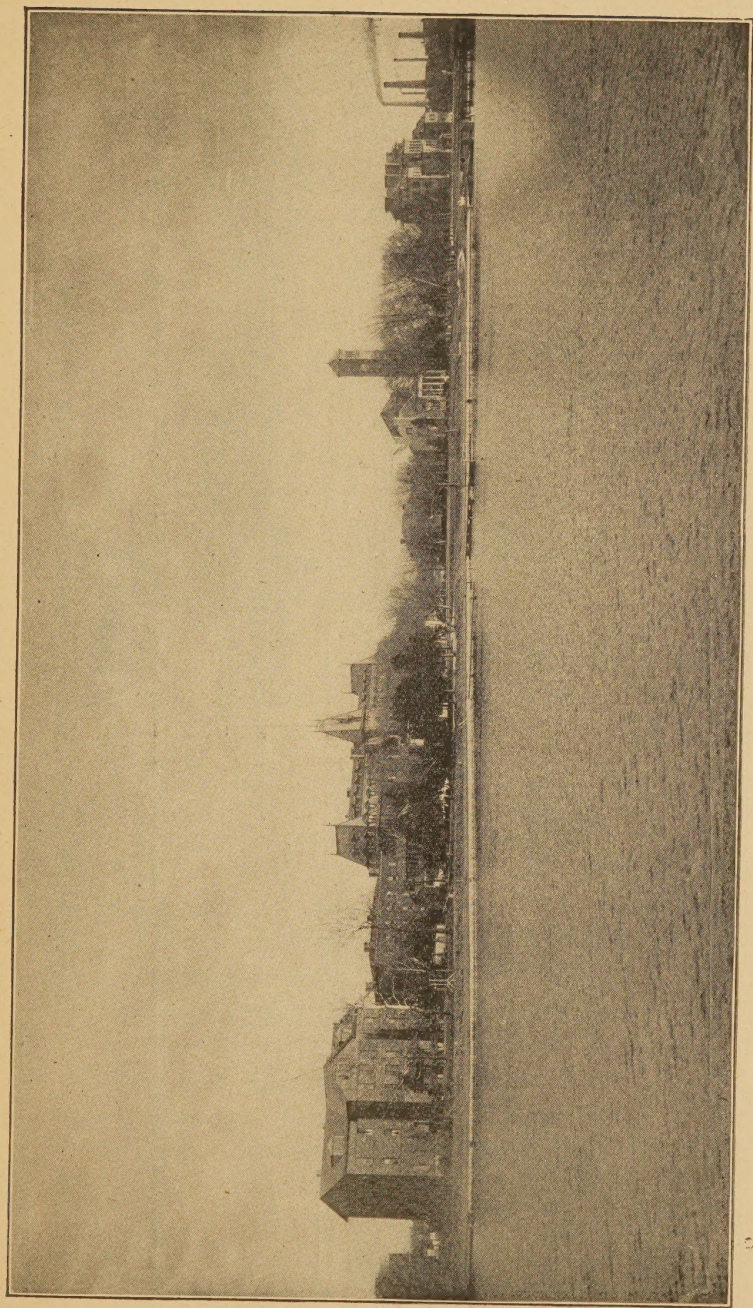
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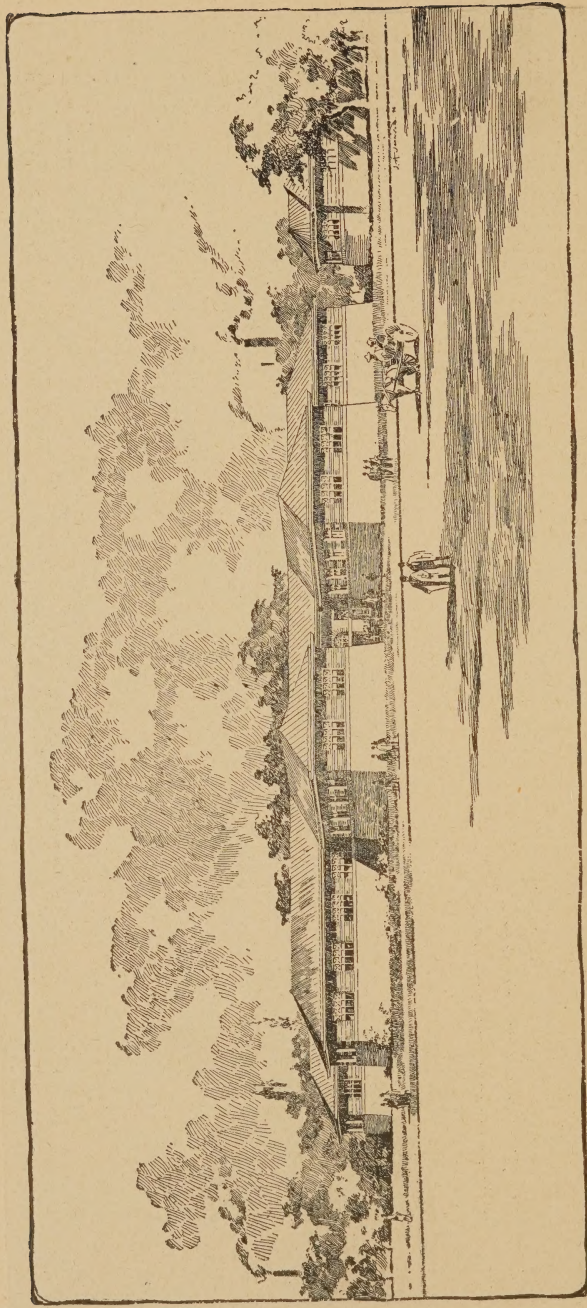
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GENERAL VIEW FROM THE WATER.

Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute,
Hampton, Va.



Plan of Building for the
Armstrong and Slater Memorial Trade School

H. B. FRISSELL, Principal.

P R E F A C E .

The following paper on the important subject of the relation of the school to the Indian health question, so vital to the future of the race, was presented in St. Paul, Minn., at the convention of the U. S. Indian Educational Association, by Dr. Martha M. Waldron, Resident Physician of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Virginia. By request of Dr. Hailmann, U. S. Supt. of Indian Schools, and in response to the wish expressed by a resolution of the Convention, it is published in this pamphlet form, in order that Indian school superintendents and employes throughout the service may have the benefit of its helpful and hopeful instructions and suggestions.

Those who receive this pamphlet will be interested in the accompanying view of the Hampton School. That institution is increasing the extent and thoroughness of its facilities for an all-round education, by advanced and improved courses in its training of teachers and farmers, and by the addition of a new trade school to its department of industrial education. The Trade School will be supplemental to the general manual training and preparatory to the productive work shops, giving complete and systematic instruction in carpentry, blacksmithing, wheelwrighting and other trades.

THE RELATION OF THE SCHOOL TO THE INDIAN HEALTH QUESTION.

BY DR. MARTHA M. WALDRON,

Resident Physician of Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia.

The experience of the Eastern school physician is limited in comparison with that of workers upon the Reservations; yet the limitations are to a degree offset by the advantage of constant observation and control of a small number.

Since taking medical charge at Hampton, fifteen years ago, 836 Indians have been under my care, from many different tribes and agencies; originally, chiefly from Dakota and Indian Territory, but, in later years, largely also from the New York and Wisconsin reservations, and from North Carolina.

One encouraging point may be noted, to begin with; the physical condition of Indian pupils on arrival at Hampton has very greatly improved within the past six years. This improvement is due to various causes, but chiefly to the fact that Indians are now seldom brought directly from the camps, but from the schools, where they have been clothed, protected and taught, as it was impossible for them to be before there were so many workers and such systematic organization.

All diseases due to neglect must diminish in proportion as the work of the field matron and school progresses—and the diseases due to neglect embrace nearly all that exist. The neglected colds of childhood lead to consumption in the adult, and what is called the natural tendency of the Indian to consumption is doubtless, in many cases, the natural result of the unnatural neglect of little children. Two-thirds of all the superficial diseases of the eye are due to nasal disease, and a large proportion of the cases of nasal disease are due to neglected colds.

The habits acquired by untrained children often predispose to disease; for instance, the habit of mouth breathing. The danger attending this habit has become well known in late years, through the work of specialists in throat, nose and ear diseases, but comparatively recent experiments have shown an added reason for the strict training of children in this respect. It has been shown that the human nose is an almost perfect filter for micro organisms. The mouth-breather, therefore, is deprived of his natural protection against the bacteria of disease. The correction of this one habit, which, unless attention were called to it, might escape observation, would save many a child from deafness and catarrhal trouble; in short, from a dwarfed and miserable life. An earache, also, is a matter of sufficient importance to demand and receive serious consideration. The ears and throats of children should always be carefully protected in severe weather. No treatment, however skillful, can rob nasal catarrh, with or without its secondary effect upon the brain, of its horrors. An ounce of prevention in this case is worth untold weight of cure.

The work of the schools, then, in the words of their chief, is "to teach the children to *know*, in order that they may know how to live *right*." Right living is the only road to long living, or to useful living, and the hygiene of the school-room, the dormitory, and the workshop is of more vital importance to the Indian child than to the child of any race further advanced in civilization and hence of greater physical stamina. The tendency of the Indian to consumption must not for a moment be forgotten in this stress of his transition period. The foundation of a sound constitution is, to a child, of more importance than an elementary education. Without health, education can avail little. Food, work, and play are the forces with which we can raise a good physical structure. The subject of food has been so carefully studied and so much has been written upon it, that it is an easy matter for any one to make a suitable and economical dietary for these cases. In the matter of work and play, experience must still be the guide and its light should be very conscientiously followed. A regular civilized life gives a degree of life-force of which

the Indian of the West has been, to a great extent, robbed by reservation conditions and restrictions.

The health rate at Hampton has risen in proportion with the number of students brought from advanced schools, and from Agencies where there have been, for at least the life time of our pupils, a Christian and school influence, and a mode of living approaching civilization.

The health of the Oneidas, as contrasted with that of the Sioux, who are behind them on the road to civilization, illustrates this fact—as also the health of the Cherokees. Out of eighty-eight Oneida and thirty-three Cherokee students, not one has died at Hampton, and only one after return home. The same is true of Indians from the New York reservations. In several cases these Indians were unsound on arrival, with incipient phthisis or more or less active scrofula; pulmonary hemorrhage occurred in some cases while the students were in school, but all responded fairly to treatment and improved and continued the course satisfactorily where an Indian from Crow Creek would have died.

The work of the school, then, is to build up from the beginning "the whole child"; to expiate the sins of the past by heroic work in the present.

Free gymnastic exercises and breathing exercises, introduced into the class room work, would be very helpful to these students, to relieve the tortured muscles unaccustomed to long sitting, to expand the poorly developed chests, and to form a habit of quick obedience. From a teacher's standpoint, it might seem a doubtful expenditure of time to introduce a ten minute gymnastic exercise between recitations, but the drill would be very beneficial, and progressively so, as the students advanced in years and became able to take more complicated exercises. This would, in a measure, take the place of a military drill, where that is impracticable, though I believe that something like a military inspection is always possible and always healthful, and should be recommended both for moral and physical reasons. Through gymnastic exercises a symmetrical development would eventually take the place of the rather dangerous proficiency which the Indians attain in certain special directions.

Even Indians who are born with an apparently fine physique are often the victims of inherited disease,—and many others who have naturally a fine muscular development are unsound from a strain in foot-racing, ball playing, wrestling or other excessive exertion. To illustrate, one broad shouldered student who suffers constantly from cardiac and pulmonary disease says,—“I run foot-race, mile and half, I take first prize.” His trouble began with that foot-race, and his case is a typical one. A fatal hemorrhage has often been brought on by the violent exertion of these untrained athletes.

Not only would gymnastic training produce a more symmetrical physical development, but also the self-control and precision of muscular movements gained by even an elementary gymnastic drill, would undoubtedly have a subjective influence and result in a firmer moral and mental poise. The more complicated exercises require close and quick mental application to co-ordinate movements, the muscle responding to the nerve, the body to the mind.

The introduction of kindergarten methods is the first step in a course which, if fully developed, would result in the highest degree of self-control.

The ventilation of class-rooms is a common and important subject for discussion. It is often difficult in climates where high winds prevail, to secure ventilation without dangerous draughts. I have found very useful, a sliding screen, used in some of the New York hospitals. It consists simply of unbleached cotton cloth, stretched on a frame which is made to slide easily with a spring in front of the window. It occupies the space of a half window. When slipped over the top sash the window behind it can be lowered as much as desired, or if over the bottom sash, the lower window can be raised. The air enters freely through the cloth, but there is no draught, even directly under the window. This is an excellent arrangement for school-rooms and hospitals. Another good arrangement for temporarily ventilating, as in a dining room, is made by adjusting a board eighteen inches wide to the upper part of the window frame. The lower edge is brought as close to the window as possible without interfering with its to and

fro motion, and the upper edge, which should extend an inch above the top of the window, is turned outward, at an angle of forty-five degrees. When the window is drawn down, the wind blowing in strikes the board, and is thrown upward and toward the center of the room, instead of directly down upon those sitting below. Either one of these arrangements is very good for sleeping rooms, the ventilation of which is of the greatest importance as they are often the rooms for sick and well together.

With the majority of Indians, consumption is a familiar evil. A great impetus to hygienic living will have been given when they can be made to believe that cleanliness, air, light and sunshine are so many weapons against their hereditary enemy.

The tubercle bacillus cannot grow without soil. What the white man at the height of his civilization, is beginning to believe his safeguard, is the only hope for the Indian. Positive, explicit directions as to cleanliness, sanitary conditions, and all that pertains to wholesome home life, as they can now be given in the home by the field-matron, will give the children a chance to grow up without being poisoned from babyhood by the exhalations from sick beds, and the floating germs of tuberculous patients. The people must be taught that dust and dirt are disease carriers to be feared.

In the days of comfortable wigwams, good food and boundless hunting grounds, consumption had little soil to grow in. The log cabin and reservation life have produced the tubercular diathesis. The way of escape is by education and experience which will lead to more wholesome living. Christian civilization is the best therapeutic measure for the Indian.

In being what he is, the Indian simply shows the powerful effect of heredity and environment. The wonderful influence of these forces is best seen in their effect upon the Indian race, from the fact that the complex influences of civilization do not enter into the account. For example, in the case of the Apache, the weakening process has acted through but one generation, yet the physical retrograde from the mountain Apache to the child of the prisoner of war, is immense. Yet in this is our

hope; what heredity and environment have done, heredity and environment can do. Make the environment healthy and the child will be healthy. The past with its mistakes, is behind us; the present and all the future is ours. Let any one who wonders why Indians have little physical endurance, read the account of the transportation of the Sioux from Fort Snelling to Crow Creek, S. D., in 1863, during which river journey of one month, 300, out of the 1,300 human beings crowded on to one small steamer, died, and let that and the immediate subsequent history of the Crow Creek Indians, stand as a type of the whole undermining process by which the Indians of many localities have become physically degenerate.

As a rule, students who are sound on arrival at Hampton do well, and many instances might be cited of individuals who were unsound who improved constantly under treatment, and finished the course satisfactorily.

Immediately on the arrival of a party, after baths and clean clothes have been given, each new-comer passes through a careful medical examination, with special reference to condition of heart and lungs, and evidences of scrofula. According to the condition of the Indian, as determined by the examination, his trade is assigned, and special diet, when necessary, prescribed. A trouble among students from some reservations is trachoma, or granular lids. This disease is measurably contagious, and in a school should receive the closest attention, as it sometimes becomes epidemic. To prevent the spreading of this, as well as more contagious diseases, it is necessary that each child should always use his own basin and towel. This simple arrangement would bar the way to much trouble, and should be as strenuously insisted upon as the use of an individual tooth brush. Good food, especially well cooked vegetable food, good lights properly placed, good air and strict cleanliness, would prevent nearly every case of granular lids, a disease, which, when fully developed, is often very obstinate, and which without proper treatment may handicap a boy or girl for a life time.

Probably in no way can so much time and pain be saved as in the care of the eyes and teeth of children of school age.

From the time of their arrival at Hampton, instruction in the hygiene of every-day life is carefully given to all the Indian pupils; to the girls in their home-like "Winona Lodge" and to the boys in their building, called "the Wigwam." The formation of the *habit* of regular hours for eating and sleeping is a matter of great importance. I am glad to say that these pupils, though hard to teach, do improve, and many finally become as careful in the details of daily life as a well bred white boy or girl, and the effect is readily seen in the improved health of the older advanced classes, the members of which are seldom excused for sickness.

During the past six years, but three Indians have died at Hampton. These were all cases of tuberculosis; two of them, one a Kiowa from Indian Territory, one an Apache, were unsound on arrival and died within the first year. Within the same period one boy died from tuberculosis in the Massachusetts General Hospital, and one girl from typhoid fever, at the North. Within the past four years, there has been but one death, that of the above mentioned Apache.

The effect of cheerful surroundings and pleasant influences upon the Indian is well known by all who have worked long with him. He is impressionable, in spite of his so-called stolidity.

All school rooms and living rooms should be made bright and attractive. Flowers should be cultivated, and the outside as well as the inside of the house be made an object lesson. Before my mind rises the picture of an exquisitely neat dormitory for girls, on a remote reservation of northern Minnesota, converted from a filthy old trade store to this beauty and use by the indefatigable efforts of an energetic government matron. The few feet of front yard were crowded with a glory of climbing nasturtiums and there was a good influence in the very look of it.

Games should be taught and encouraged in connection with the schools. Basket ball is one of the best new games, both for out of doors and in. Base ball, tennis, and the old Indian games as far as they are innocent in tendency, should be encouraged both for physical and moral health. The young Indian, at the present time

has few resources within himself, and without help must fall into dangerous stagnation. A monotonous life is unwholesome to any youth, and to this youth, whose introspection can develop little helpful or uplifting, it is fatal. There should be a united effort, on the part of all who want to help the Indian, to relieve him of the monotony of his life, to give him work and play as well, and to make his natural love of excitement a lever for his uplifting.

The nervous sensibility of all Indians is great and leads them to unnatural excitement and corresponding depression. The inevitable inheritance of generations born in tumult, war, fear and uncertainty, must be irritable nerve centers and moral and intellectual faculties subordinated to the physical. Nature demands a heavy penalty for violated laws. The Indian has ignorantly broken all laws, and has paid and is paying a terrible penalty. This does not, however, mean extermination of the race, a portion of which has shown itself capable of adaptation to change of environment and new condition of social life. Education in living, correct moral standard, and a motive to stimulate endeavor, this is what the Indian needs.

The value of manual and industrial training lies in its unequalled power to supply such a motive and aid in the development of the body and in the formation of character. In Eastern schools, with their full staff of workers, and all agencies for good, including the summer outing in an intelligent family, there is, in addition to regular discipline and instruction, an education by insensible absorption of ideas, and the common sense of every-day life, which is of inestimable value to the Indian pupil. Those who come from Western schools are on a plane where nothing is lost. Western training enhances the value of every opportunity at the East; and the Indian, on his part, at the East, has wonderfully taught and interested thousands, whose ideas kindly but vague would otherwise have borne no fruit of helpfulness.

As far as I have known, there is with the majority of Indian pupils advanced to thoughtful years, an earnest desire to help their people. How rapidly they may be fitted for this work, the number and excellence of Ind-

ian schools will determine. Many are already equipped, and are doing with their might what their hands find to do

The fact that twenty-three Hampton girls are married to Hampton boys, and as many more to educated boys from other schools, suggests for the Indian work, a solid foundation of good homes. There must be a great improvement in living where educated Indians join hands to make a home. These young people will surely care for the health of their children, and will put into use for them, the practical lessons learned at school.

Here then, in Christian education, is the beginning of the end of the old unwholesome living. The conditions of camp life are sufficient to predispose the strongest to disease, and, especially, to engender and develop pulmonary consumption. A vicious civilization is responsible for the degradation of camp life. The physical as well as moral tendency of that life is constantly downward and without hope. Educating the Indian means offering him a chance to stem the tide of inherited disease which tends to sweep him away. It means salvation from his past and hope for his future. In this work let East and West join hands.

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